



September 12, 2022

Upcoming Events

[Forest Management Academy – East – September 13 – 15](#)

[Forest Management Academy – West – September 27 – 29](#)

- ◆ This month, VDOF will hold two agency training events during its annual Forest Management Academy for field-level foresters and resource managers. Designed to supplement, enhance and broaden employee knowledge and skills in current and emerging topics, the all-day training sessions support employee development and knowledge to provide the best forest management guidance to Virginia landowners and citizens.

[Fall Fire Academy – Western Region – September 13 – 16](#)

- ◆ VDOF’s Western Regional Incident Management Team will conduct a Fall Fire Training Academy September 13-16 at Breaks Interstate Park. VDOF provides national level training in the areas of wildfire suppression, all-hazard emergency response and incident management. These trainings ensure VDOF responders and agency cooperators maintain the highest level of firefighting expertise. Courses being offered will include engine operator, wildland fire chainsaws, crew boss and firefighter training (field day).
- ◆ Visit <https://dof.virginia.gov/events/> for more public events and <https://dof.virginia.gov/events/category/employee-only/> for more employee only events.

News You Can Use

Important FSA Deadlines for 2021-2022 Plan Year Accounts

- ◆ Please see the chart below for important dates for the Flexible Spending Account (FSA) Program. This includes both the Health Flexible Spending Account (HFSA) and the Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (DCFSA).

Date	Description	Population Impacted
06/30/2022	Last day to incur expenses for 21-22 Plan Year. Determines eligibility for the DCFSA grace period.	Employees enrolled during the 21-22 Plan Year. Employees enrolled in a DCFSA on this date with a remaining balance.
09/15/2022	Last day to incur expenses related to Grace Period extension.	Employees eligible for the DCFSA Grace Period.

09/30/2022	Normal runout period to file claims ends for the plan year ending June 30, 2022.	Employees enrolled in a HFSA or DCFSA with no Grace Period.
10/31/2022	Extended claims filing period for Grace Period ends. All claims and documentation must be received by PayFlex on or before this date. PayFlex will not accept claims postmarked but not received by this date.	All employees with the DCFSA Grace Period ending on September 15, 2022.

- Employees may login to payflex.com or call customer service at 1-855-516-8595 for account information. Claims may be FAXED to 1-888-238-3539. If you FAX your claim please keep your FAX confirmation. Claims may also be mailed to:

PayFlex Systems USA, Inc.
PO Box 14879
Lexington, KY 40512-4879

Last Week

Agency Database Transition

- ◆ VDOF staff and leadership participated in a kickoff meeting with the Esri project team that will be working on the first phase of transitioning the agency's custom integrated forest resource information system (IFRIS) database. The first phase includes developing an entire IFRIS database structure, as well as completing the transition of the timber harvest inspection element. Developed nearly 20 years ago, IFRIS has been expanded multiple times. This project is intended to move VDOF to the industry-standard Esri platform, which is a world leader in geographic information systems.

Forest Sustainability Fund

- ◆ As part of the development of the Forest Sustainability Fund, established by the 2022 General Assembly to offset foregone revenue for localities with forest land use taxation, VDOF, in cooperation with Virginia Tech, distributed a survey to determine overall statewide participation in this taxation option and its impact on counties. The survey closed this week with approximately 75 responses. Next steps for the Fund include continued development of guidelines and the application process, both planned for mid-October.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ VDOF Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) team members have completed & transmitted 84% of the inventory plots in the current VA2021 panel of work as of September 1 (FIA staff had completed 75% as of August 1).
- ◆ The Utilization & Marketing (U&M) team continues to gather mill input and output data in an effort to complete more Timber Products Output (TPO) surveys for agency and USDA Forest Service (USFS) needs.
- ◆ Rachel Harris (U&M specialist) submitted the final draft of the Hardwood SRTS grant to the USFS for their review and approval, with the intention of marking that grant fulfilled and completed.
- ◆ Sabina Dhungana (U&M program manager) is working with Forest2Market on finalizing the Pine Resource study.
- ◆ A total of 55 applications, totaling \$1.2 million, were submitted for the Virginia Trees for Clean Water grant cycle for Fall 2022/Spring 2023 planting projects. Our ranking committee of certified arborists

reviewed and ranked each application last week. Grantees will be notified and awards will be issued in the coming weeks.

- ◆ Lara Johnson (U&CF program manager) and Kendall Topping (community forestry specialist) met with Teens for a Purpose in Norfolk to look at a site for soil rebuilding this winter. They also met with City of Hampton Parks and Recreation staff to complete a tree inventory at Bluebird Gap Farm.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) virtually attended the monthly National Forest Health Monitoring (FHM) Management Team meeting. This group is composed of federal FHM leaders and a state representative from each of the four Mega-Regions. In addition to a monthly team meeting, the group is planning the National FHM workshop for February 2023.
- ◆ Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager) participated in a meeting with the Blue Ridge Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM). The PRISM is a nonprofit that works towards reducing the negative impacts of invasive species, and VDOF is on the advisory committee. Opportunities for future collaboration were discussed, including a volunteer spotted lanternfly egg mass survey this winter.

State Forest

- ◆ Personnel blocked unauthorized ATV access into the Channels State Forest. ATVs are not allowed on State Forests under current regulations.
- ◆ The Conservation Fund will be taking a tour with staff and supporters of the Charlotte State Forest on September 14.

State-Owned Lands

- ◆ Harvesting operations started on the Greensville Correctional Facility timber sale.
- ◆ Harvesting operations starting on the Albert Horton Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk.
- ◆ Additional invasive species control work is being done on Catawba Hospital property to control miscanthus and lower the possible future fire danger on the property.